

Religion

ARGUS BOOK REVIEW

New book: "The Hoodlum Preacher"

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"As the reader digests the humor and sadness, reverence and awe that is skillfully and dynamically ensconced within these pages one might tend to forget that this is not a novel or a writing of fiction that is before us. It is a real life story, with real situations and with an authentic and practical message for people of every walk of life. Your life will be profoundly impacted by his. It has been both my privilege and my pleasure to serve as his pastor, prayer partner and friend."

-- Rev. Ronald L. Bobo, Sr.
West Side M.B. Church
St. Louis, Missouri.

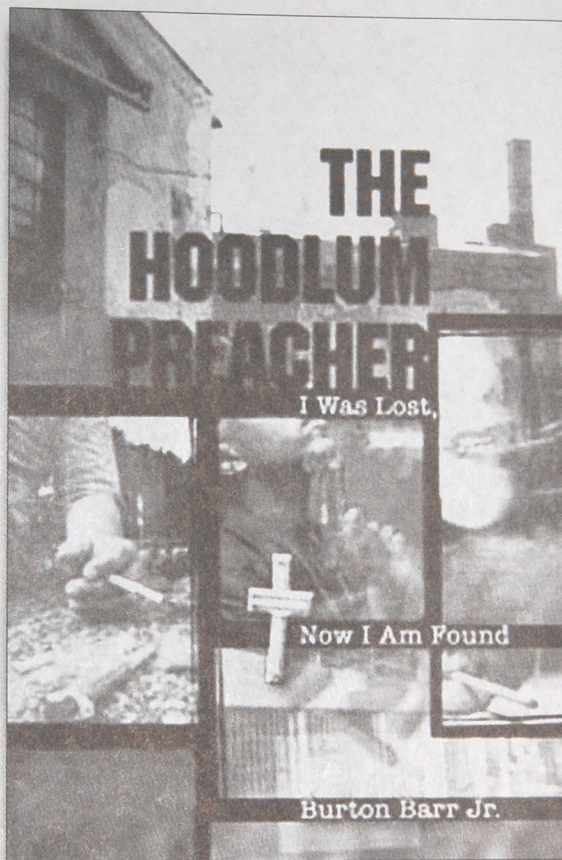
From prison to the pulpit, this con artist-turned church preacher, went from standing in a police lineup to standing alongside Rev. Jesse Jackson. A new book details a life of crime and redemption, as a former drug addict now helps troubled youth and young prisoners avert a wasted life and turn things around as he finally did.

Over a 22-year period, stemming from age 20 until his early 40's, Rev. Burton Barr, Jr. was a lost soul. Arrested over 30 times - and wanted by the police in over a half-dozen jurisdictions -- Barr had done everything possible to mess his life up. It's not the life you would expect from someone who was ordained a preacher at a young age.

Rev. Barr's life may have been lived in a fog but he recounts the ugly details of his crime spree in a new, moving autobiography, *The Hoodlum Preacher*.

"It seemed that I was wanted all over the eastern part of Missouri," says Rev. Barr. "There were warrants for me in St. Louis, St. Ann, Bridgeton, Maryland Heights, Richmond Heights, and several other municipalities." He'd committed crimes in Chicago, Detroit, San Diego, and other cities as well.

"I was not a family man," he confesses. "I was a dope fiend, a con man, a liar, and a thief. I used anyone that came in contact with



me. Every turn that I made was the wrong turn, and every road that I took was the wrong road."

Rev. Barr reveals a long litany of wrongs, misdeeds, crimes, and reprehensible actions. A sampling of his troubled lifestyle included:

- Gun-carrying drug dealer
- Stole from employers
- Passed bad checks
- Alcoholic and drug addict
- Started a race riot
- Cheating husband and wife-beater
- Kicked out of the Marines
- Ripped off family members
- Stole from the church
- Scammed people while in a cult

Everyone was after Rev. Barr,

including the drug dealers he'd stolen from, the cops, and family members whom he'd ripped off to support a drug habit that peaked in the mid-1980's at up to \$500 a day. His out-of-control life saw his career struggle, his marriage fail, his freedom taken, and his life jeopardized.

"By the age of 20 I was shooting heroin, smoking weed, getting drunk and stealing to support myself, turning away from the church that would eventually offer me an opportunity for redemption," says Rev. Barr.

Maybe he was just following in his father's footsteps, a man who also was an alcoholic-turned-preacher. Maybe he was just a product of his times, growing up a young Black urban man in the 1960's, where the country raged

out of control over civil rights, the Vietnam War, and a cultural revolution. His neighborhood friends fared no better - getting shot, overdosing, or ending up in prison.

But Rev. Barr managed to finally turn the tide. He got clean and sober, stopped his life of crime, and invested his time and heart into serving his church once again. It was a long time coming, but he finally straightened his life out. Since 1994 he's been preaching and making a positive impact on the lives of others. In fact, just a few years ago he rekindled a romance with a woman he hadn't seen in 35 years and they wed on Valentine's Day, again proving it's never too late for good things to happen in one's life.

Rev. Barr provides insight on lessons learned, including:

- You don't have to let where you are dictate who you are.
- No one is beyond redemption. It's never too late to turn your life around.
- No matter what you have done, or what you have become, God loves you.

"Our children need all of the help that they can get," says Rev. Barr. "We need to not only recruit people from our churches, but from the business community as well. We have to let people know that our children are our future, and a troubled child is not necessarily a bad child. He is sometimes just misguided. Children, like everyone else, want to be accepted. They want to feel like they are part of something. We have to make them part of something that is positive or they become part of a gang."

Rev. Barr now speaks at prisons, churches, and schools, helping to change lives and make a difference. He began by saving his own life, and now he helps others.

Publication Data: *The Hoodlum Preacher* by Rev. Burton Barr, Jr.; Kobalt Books; April 25th; Trade Paperback; \$14.95; ISBN: 0-9769117-1-X; 200 Pages